

Central Texas Pilots Fly Relief Missions to Katrina Victims

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By Jay Carpenter



Bob Gloris (left) helps load TXAA member Mike Thompson's RV6.

On the last weekend of August 2005, Hurricane Katrina slammed into the Gulf Coast of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, leaving devastation, death, disease and suffering. The level 4 hurricane killed hundreds and completely shut down New Orleans when levee dams broke, flooding 80 percent of that city. A complete evacuation was ordered.

Through associations like the Texas Aviation Association, hundreds of pilots started communicating with each other through the Internet, offering their help. Unfortunately, due to the poor management of the disaster from FEMA and the federal and state government's bodies, no one knew what to do. Frustrated pilots willing to provide their planes and gas to get aid to the suffering victims were told that their help wasn't needed.

Not willing to sit on their hands, many dedicated individuals volunteered and coordinated their own grass-roots relief effort. Bob and D'Anne Gloris, owners of Lakeview Aviation at Rusty Allen Airport (5R3) in Lago Vista, Texas, provided the hangar storage and phone center for food, water and provisions to be brought from area churches, food stores and citizens of Lago Vista. Pilots from as far away as Mexico and California arrived to haul as much water and food as their plane's useful load would allow, and then flew to small airports in the hard hit areas in Louisiana and Mississippi.

The flights began on Friday, September 2, five days after the flooding began in New Orleans. TXAA was quick to spread the news to its membership and other pilot organizations asking for help. As of September 12, 115 flights had delivered 53,000 pounds of food and supplies.

The flights began small at first, with three planes leaving Lago Vista on September 2. Before long, 10 to 20 flights were leaving daily from the small airport to places like Diamondhead and Taylortown, Mississippi, and Thibodaux, and Houma, Louisiana. These smaller communities are desperate for aid that larger cities receive more quickly.

“After that experience of flying there, delivering desperately needed items, you will never be the same again,” said D’Anne Gloris. Jim Awalt had a similar experience in Baton Rouge. By the way, he was the first from Lago to show up with bells on.



Volunteers lend a hand.

“The pilots who have flown already know that this wouldn’t have been possible without the tireless efforts of the citizens of Lago Vista,” Gloris said. “Their generosity has been overwhelming! And thank God for PTA moms and dads.”

Tarps, rope, sleeping bags, tents, personal toiletries and food are being packed into personal aircraft and being flown at the aircraft owner/pilot’s personal expense.

This airlift is an effort that we as Texans can be proud of. Churches, food stores, women’s clubs, neighborhood associations, Lion’s clubs, volunteers from area communities and pilots all rolled up their sleeves to help our suffering neighbors to the east. TXAA sends its congratulations for their continuing generosity.